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SUBJECT: BAKASSI DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES: THE PRIME
MINISTER'S REPORT

REF: YAOUNDE 1041

1. (SBU) Summary: Cameroon has formed a committee to coordinate future development projects for Bakassi, under the auspices of the Prime Minister. The committee's initial report, designed to provide a broad road map for consideration by the government and donors, outlines priority needs for Bakassi in the areas of transport and public works, agriculture, communication, defense and security, energy and water, education, fisheries and livestock, health and recreation, tourism, forests and wildlife, social affairs and women empowerment, and administration. The total short term price tag is \$239 million, with a total figure of about \$487 million over an unspecified time period. Foreign Ministry contacts downplayed the PM's report and it is not clear how much weight the report will be given in government decisionmaking and the November budget. At the least, it provides useful information about current conditions in Bakassi and about some of the government's thinking regarding next steps. As we get greater clarity on the government's needs, the USG should look for ways to support post-conflict stabilization and development efforts in Bakassi. End summary.

2. (U) Following the handover of Bakassi to Cameroon on August 14, the Government of Cameroon (GRC) formed a Committee for the Coordination and Monitoring of the Implementation of Priority Projects to be realized in Bakassi. Committee members visited the Peninsula, drew on the findings of earlier workshops and consulted with local authorities and experts. Working under the auspices of Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni and headed by Special Advisor of the Prime Minister Jacob Lekunze Ketuma, the Committee produced a report in August entitled "The Priority Program for Planning and Development of the Bakassi Area." The report argued for 119 billion FCFA (about \$239 million at the current exchange rate) in short-term projects and set a total budget for development (including longer term priorities) at 243.4 billion FCFA (about \$487 million).

3. (U) In the preface to the report, Prime Minister Inoni notes that the document is not exhaustive but is meant to be a road map and to "give an idea of the amount of work that needs to be done in this area". He invites government, national investors, and development partners to "have an appropriation of this document," highlighting the "triggering element" for the region's development as the tarring of the Kumba-Ekondo-titi-Mendemba-Akwa road.

4. (U) In addition to the tarring of the road, the report identifies five priorities:

- the construction of classrooms, health centers, and sports and leisure infrastructures
- Radio and TV signal coverage

- Provision of equipment for fishing, water and electricity
- Urban development and the "development of a bank of development projects"
- Construction of public services and staff residences

15. (U) The report also enumerates six main constraints:

- The availability of land
- Geotechnical constraints (especially the quality of water in the soil, most notably at Idabato and part of Kombo Abedimo)
- The acute enclave nature of the area
- The absence of access roads
- The "hostile nature of the milieu"

Transport and Public Works

16. (U) The report notes that Bakassi is inaccessible by land and is mainly open to maritime transport from Nigeria. There are 5,700 fishing boats, about 50 "developed landing points", and 175 km of bad earth roads. However, there is no public transportation, no air transport or port infrastructure, no road network, and difficult conditions for transportation (poor carrying capacity of soil and the

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absence of building materials or potable water). The population (which the GRC estimates at 75,000) is not permanent and there are only two housing estates. In addition to the Kumba-Akwa road, the report identifies the medium term need for a number of secondary roads, the construction of modern landing structures, and the construction of a heliport, airstrip and hydro port. It sees the long term need for a port.

Short Term Budget: \$179 million

Agriculture

17. (U) Agriculture is predominantly subsistence, which reportedly has not been doing well because of low education levels, poor support services, lack of land titling, isolation from markets and services, and the absence of investment. There is some commercial agriculture (oil palm, rubber, coconuts) carried out by CDC and some oil palm and rubber production done by PAMOL. CDC is planning to double its acreage while PAMOL is expanding its work force by 1,500 employees. There are also a number of small producers, mostly in palm oil. Agricultural extension services in Bakassi are limited. The report identifies the need to construct divisional and sub-divisional agriculture and rural development institutions and technical posts, to transfer technical staff and create training centers, and to construct small agricultural infrastructure (bridges, culverts etc.)

Short Term Budget: \$3.5 million

Communication

18. (U) Bakassi has no Cameroonian media access and is only covered by radio and television from Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, France (RFI) and Great Britain (BBC). The report sees the short term need for construction of an antenna to relay radio and TV signals at Ekondo-titi and Mundemba and to encourage telephone operators to come to Bakassi. Over the medium term, the report argues for construction of an FM

radio station to relay state-run CRTV signals and, over the long term, other public and private media.

Short Term Budget: \$1.4 million

Defense and Security

¶9. (U) Security for Bakassi is the responsibility of a logistic battalion, a Central Operational Unit, Operational Units in the North and South, Gendarmerie Brigades in all Sub-Divisions and public security police stations at Akwa and Ngosso. (Note: since the publication of this report, the President has also assigned the Rapid Intervention Battalion, BIR, to upgrade security in Bakassi. End note.) The report identifies the need for construction of Gendarmerie and police camps, stations, barracks and other facilities in Akwa, Ngosso, Isangele, Bamusso and other sites. It argues for the construction of a naval base and special unit at Akwa and a military base at Idabato.

Short Term Budget: \$7.7 million

Energy and Water

¶10. (U) Only six of 45 localities (towns, villages and settlements) have an electricity network. Most electricity on the Peninsula is by stand-alone generators or solar platforms. The Divisional Headquarters, Mundemba, is the only locality being supplied by Cameroon's main supplier of electricity, AES-Sonel. There is no fueling station in Bakassi; all petroleum products come from Nigeria. While Bakassi is situated in a coastal sedimentary zone and rainfall is abundant, water infrastructure is poor and water sources are not generally of good quality (impacted by salination or pollution from fishing and pit toilets). There is a large need for maintenance and new investments in power generation and distribution, as well as in water projects and water management training.

Short Term Budget: \$2.7 million

Education

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¶11. (U) In areas completely or partially occupied by Nigeria during the conflict (Sub-Divisions of Idabato, Kombo Abedimo, and Isangele) there are a total of about 1,000 primary school pupils (in two out of three sub-divisions, only one fourth of school age children is registered in the first year of primary education). In the areas peripheral to the conflict (Kombo Itindi and Bamusso), primary school enrollment is higher (26% and 66% respectively). In other sub-divisions, enrollment and infrastructure are even better.

The report seeks the construction, rehabilitation and equipping of 597 classrooms and staff rooms. It envisions construction of a teacher training college and 579 new teachers. Over the medium and long term, there is a need for over 2,000 additional classrooms and staff quarters. Bakassi has one Government Technical College (at Akwa) and two government high schools. Under the HIPC initiative, 17 new classrooms are reportedly being built. The Prime Minister's report sees the need to construct 12 classrooms, two more secondary schools and another technical college, in the short term, with a number of other facilities in the longer term.

Short Term Budget: \$28.3 million

Fishery and Livestock

¶12. (U) This sector has been well studied and the region has rich fishing resources. Constraints include: destruction

of habitat, including mangroves; destructive fishing methods; the lack of data and surveillance; the underdevelopment of landing, storage, road and marketing infrastructure; and the absence of credit. The report laments the low involvement of Cameroonians (versus Nigerians) in the sector. Priority projects focus on creating five cooperatives, better training and equipment for fishermen, constructing other infrastructure (cold storage, dryers, electricity etc.), as well as fish training centers and markets.

Short Term Budget: \$2.8 million

Public Health and Recreation

¶13. (U) Bakassi's only sports and leisure structures are in government high schools. The PM's report includes a plan for mini-sports complexes and the creation of leisure sites. Bakassi has eight health centers with one doctor. Health challenges include widespread poverty, poor infrastructure, and a widely dispersed population. The report's wish list for the sector includes the construction and rehabilitation of many health facilities, as well as vehicles, generators, boats and staff housing. The long term goal is constructing and equipping a Bakassi district hospital at Isangele.

Short Term Budget: \$2.1 million

Tourism, Forests and Wildlife

¶14. (U) Bakassi has one national park (Korup) of 125,000 hectares, created in 1937, and two forest reserves, Rumpi and Mokoko (45,843 and 9,065 hectares respectively). Korup has benefited from World Wildlife Fund and other assistance over the years but intensive exploitation of mangroves is a threat to the marine environment of the region. The PM's report envisages the creation of Ngongore game reserve and several community forests and hunting zones. It also notes a need for an inventory of possible touristic sites and the construction of a hotel complex in Akwa.

Short Term Budget: \$3.7 million

Social Sector

¶15. (U) Bakassi currently has three social welfare centers, which the PM's report argues need to be rehabilitated and better staffed. The Ministry of Land Tenure and State Properties has initiated a land plan for Akwa (Kombo Abedimo) and Edema Mbassi (Idabato); the PM's report would like to finalize these plans and complete land partitioning and registration.

Short Term Budget: \$3.2 million

Administration

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¶16. (U) There has been "remarkable progress" in the construction of District Officer (DO) offices and residence of administrative authorities, while office space for municipal and local councils is virtually nonexistent. According to the report, this is in part a result of constraints in the Greentree Agreement, which prohibits tax collection in the localities during the transition period leading up to 2013, and therefore deprives local governments of resources. The report cites the need for construction and rehabilitation of numerous DO and Council offices and residences. The Ministry of Economy, Planning and Territorial Administration (MINEPAT), which will have the

lead in administering development projects in Bakassi, has constructed ten guest houses, several dock yards and other buildings. The report envisages more guest houses and dock yards and the initiation of rural micro-projects funded by the European Union. The report also cites the need to rehabilitate a dilapidated customs post at Bamusso and to create several new customs offices.

Short Term Budget: \$7.15 million

Next Steps

¶17. (U) The Chairman of the Bakassi Committee and Special Advisor of the Prime Minister Ketuma told Pol/Econ Chief that the GRC's vision is to bring Bakassi to the development level of its neighboring areas in Cameroon by 2011 (presumably this is the short term timeframe used in the report). He highlighted the top priority of road construction, arguing that building roads would help solve the region's security challenges. The report is being reviewed by technical ministries and will be the subject of an inter-agency meeting in December, after the FY 2009 budget is passed, he said. At the meeting, the GRC will determine how much of the Bakassi development cost it will bear and how much support it will seek from donors. Donors can then decide what they want to support, he said.

¶18. (SBU) Ketuma opined that the poverty of Bakassi was due to negligence from Nigeria and said the GRC's challenge was to "win the hearts and minds" of the Nigerians who had left and those who had hesitantly returned (though he thought most had returned). When Pol/Econ Chief pointed out the logistical and security challenges of development work in the area, he insisted that development was the key to improving Bakassi's security, once again highlighting the priority need for roads.

Comment

¶19. (SBU) The PM's 135-page glossy report succeeds in setting the stage and outlining some broad priorities within each sector. However, it does not prioritize between sectors and is heavily focused on construction projects (of roads, health centers, schools etc.) rather than on technical assistance, staffing, or other kinds of development. Some of its budget proposals also seem questionable, with a higher budget for tourism, forests and wildlife than for health or energy, and a large budget for administrative buildings.

¶20. (SBU) It is not clear what weight the PM's report will have. Several senior contacts at the Ministry of External Relations have expressed skepticism about this report, pointing out that it is just designed to set broad guidelines and arguing the need for a priority focus on security in Bakassi. The European Union is already planning to spend over \$5 million in multi-sector development support for Bakassi, responding to funding requests from the Ministry of Economy and Planning, without reference to the PM's report. The GRC plans to approach individual donors to support specific needs and appears to want the USG to focus on security assistance. The recently completed, successful Cameroon-Nigeria Joint Commission session (reftel) revealed good will in both countries to cooperate on both development and security in Bakassi. The pace and sequencing of this process, and the possible involvement of foreign donors, remains to be seen and will no doubt depend heavily on the preferences of President Biya.

¶21. (SBU) Even with its shortcomings and the lack of clarity about what will happen with the PM's report, it is encouraging that the GRC is doing some planning for Bakassi (not normally one of the government's strengths) and that it

intends to incorporate many of these needs in the upcoming budget. The United States has a strategic interest in helping to stabilize the post-conflict, oil-rich Bakassi area, which is challenged by organized banditry and other illegal activities, and whose security and development have implications for both Cameroon and Nigeria. As the government further clarifies its development needs in Bakassi, post will look for ways to provide support.

GARVEY